

The Hindu



ANALYSIS IN ENGLISH



29TH APRIL 2019

BY AMIT SAINI



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MCQ 1

1. Trade across the LoC began in October 2008, as part of the Kashmir-specific confidence building measures (CBMs) that had been initiated by former Prime Ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Dr. Manmohan Singh and former Pakistan President Gen. Pervez Musharraf.
2. The diamonds produced in California in the United States have been regularly finding their way through LoC trade involving a large transport network.

Choose correct

- (A) **Only 1**
- (B) Only 2
- (C) Both
- (D) None

MCQ 2

1. Army General (Retd.) Dalbir Singh Suhag was appointed as High Commissioner of India to Republic of Seychelles.
2. This is first time any Appointment of former defence personnel as envoy to countries.

Choose correct

(A) **Only 1**

(B) Only 2

(C) Both

(D) None

MCQ 3

According to WHO how much time atleast is needed of physical activities for kids 1-5 years age

- A. 1 hour
- B. 30 mins
- C. 5 hours
- D. **3 hours**

MCQ 4

Biggest producer of palm oil in the world is

- A. India
- B. Brazil
- C. **Indonesia**
- D. USA

MCQ 5

1. **Global Forest Watch (GFW)** is an open-source web application to monitor global forests in near real-time. GFW is an initiative of the [World Resources Institute](#) (WRI)
2. **World Resources Institute (WRI)** is a UN's specialized agency

Choose correct

- (A) **Only 1**
- (B) Only 2
- (C) Both
- (D) None

Vocabulary

- Clarion call
- Brinkmanship
- Eloquent
- Intransigence
- Respite
- Obliterate

The RBI must set an example on transparency, and serve the national economic interest

- The Reserve Bank of India has been given a “last opportunity” by the Supreme Court to stop being in “contempt” of the court’s clear and unambiguous [order of December 2015](#).
- Ruling on a batch of **contempt petitions against the RBI**, a two-judge bench directed it to furnish all information relating to inspection reports and other material sought by Right to Information (RTI) petitioners, save material exempted by the court’s earlier order particularly on the grounds that it had a bearing on the security of the state.
- The bench made it clear that “any further violation shall be viewed seriously”. The banking regulator has repeatedly tried to stonewall multiple requests seeking information ranging from the **names of wilful defaulters on bank loans** worth hundreds of crores of rupees, to the **bank-wise breakup of mark-to-market (MTM) losses** and the **losses in foreign currency derivatives** contract cases.
- The **Central Information Commission too had**, in November, directed the then RBI Governor, Urjit Patel, to show cause “why maximum penalty should not be imposed on him” for the central bank’s “defiance” of Supreme Court orders on [disclosing the names of wilful loan defaulters](#).
- The RBI was ticked off by the CIC for failing to uphold the interest of the public and not fulfilling its statutory duty to depositors, the economy and the banking sector, by privileging individual banks’ interests over its obligation to ensure transparency.

- At a time when the level of bad loans at commercial banks continues to remain worryingly high, worsening their combined capital to risk-weighted assets ratio (CRAR), it is inexcusable that the RBI continues to keep the largest lenders to banks, the depositors, and the public in the dark on the specific loan accounts that are endangering the banking system's health and viability.
- The RBI's latest **Financial Stability Report** shows that the industry-wide CRAR slid to 13.7% in September 2018, from 13.8% in March 2018, with the ratio at the crucial public sector banks declining more sharply to 11.3%, from 11.7% over the same period.
- For a banking regulator that never tires of stressing the need for greater accountability from the numerous public sector banks, the RBI's reluctance to be more transparent is perplexing.
- Even its latest Disclosure Policy, posted on its website on April 12 after the Division Bench had concluded hearings in the contempt case and reserved judgment, continues to direct its departments to withhold information that was expressly ordered to be shared by the December 2015 order.
- As the CIC aptly observed last year, the central bank's intransigence and repeated failure to honour the court's orders ultimately undermines the very rule of law it seeks to enforce as a banking sector regulator empowered by Parliament.

The CRAR is the capital needed for a bank measured in terms of the assets (mostly loans) disbursed by the banks. **Higher the assets, higher should be the capital by the bank.**

The government must be more proactive in shifting vehicles to cleaner fuels

- The decision taken by Maruti Suzuki, India's largest passenger vehicle manufacturer, **to eliminate diesel models from April 1, 2020**, when the Bharat Stage VI emission standard is introduced, mirrors emerging global trends.
- Although diesel has powered India's commercial transport segment for decades, its fortunes are declining for several reasons, beginning with the **narrowing of the price differential with petrol**.
- It has lost its shine in Europe, the world's biggest market for diesel cars where sales of even well-known marques have fallen during 2018 by 20%.
- In a variety of mandated and suggestive ways, **car-owners are being nudged towards petrol and alternative fuels**. The **diesel emissions data scandal** involving carmaker Volkswagen dismayed many consumers.
- Given the prevailing economics and diesel's **reputation as a dirty fuel** that adds to pollution from cars, buses and freight vehicles, auto companies see a weak business case to upgrade them. Maruti Suzuki's decision makes it clear that in spite of being a strong past performer, this fuel is riding into the sunset **as far as the personal vehicle is concerned**.
- **This outcome should be welcomed for the positive impact it will have on air quality and public health.**

- Automotive emissions, especially in congested cities, have risen due to steady economic growth, proliferation of vehicles and more vehicle kilometres travelled. In Delhi, for instance, the effect of **shifting the three-wheeler and bus fleet to Compressed Natural Gas during a four-year period from 1998 improved air quality, but the gains were quickly negated by a rise in overall vehicle numbers**, especially those run on diesel, besides a rise in other sources of pollution.
- Marking the steady deterioration in air quality, one study found that people on the road in Delhi had 1.5 times greater exposure to the city's average ambient [air pollution](#) level.
- Diesel emissions pose hidden hazards, too. Besides the harmful fine and ultra fine particulates that they contain, the vehicular exhaust adds to **ground-level ozone formed from nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons combining in the presence of sunlight**, seriously harming respiratory health.
- The national plan to shift to higher quality BS VI grade fuels may offer some mitigation of pollution, but that can only be a respite. **Improving air quality in the cities requires a transformative planning approach guided by the singular objective of reducing the use of polluting vehicles.**
- Such a policy would prioritise less-polluting and alternative fuels for vehicles, but more important, encourage walking, cycling and using public transport. This is the direction that many world cities are taking. Paris, Madrid and Athens have announced a prohibition on diesel vehicles by 2025, while London has made it more expensive for older vehicles to enter the city. India has to chart its own equitable and accessible green path.

AN INEFFECTUAL ANGEL



The judiciary's rhetoric has little purpose if it evades cases that call for it to enforce the grand principles of democracy

- The transition from a colonial regime to a democratic republic was one of the most singular achievements in Indian history. In her magisterial *How India Became Democratic*, Ornit Shani details the Herculean efforts that went into pulling off independent India's first general election. By stipulating in the Constitution that elections must be conducted on the basis of universal adult suffrage, **our framers transformed an entire population from subjects to citizens in one sweeping stroke**. It was an achievement that many doubted would be possible, but one whose success should make us all proud.

Free and fair elections

- At the heart of this achievement is the citizen's right to vote. It is through the vote that the democratic legitimacy is periodically renewed and the foundations of the republic remain stable. But **it is not simply the act of voting that is enough**: rather, **voting must take place as part of a free and fair election**.
- **And for that, there must exist a number of institutional factors and conditions, all of which, taken together, culminate in that final act of the voter casting her ballot.**

- The Indian **Supreme Court has recognized this basic principle. In many judgments** over the years, the court has set out the enabling conditions that guarantee that voting remains a meaningful activity. These include, for example, the citizen's right not to be arbitrarily denied the vote (the court has, therefore, held that **voting is a fundamental freedom guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution**); the **right to know** (thus, requiring compulsory declaration of certain information by candidates); and the **right to a secret ballot** (that has prompted the court to order the inclusion of a NOTA, or None of the Above option). As the Supreme Court has reminded us many times, **public faith in the electoral process is crucial to the continued survival of republican democracy**, and it is these institutional safeguards that come together to ensure it.

Judicial inaction

- Like with any other competitive process, the ground rules that constitute the framework of the competition must be enforced by an impartial umpire. It is here that the **role of an independent judiciary is crucial**. While in popular imagination, the primary role of the courts is to protect the fundamental rights of individuals against the state, another — equally critical — task of courts is **to ensure that the ground rules of electoral competition, which are necessary to ensure free and fair elections, are maintained**. For obvious reasons, this is **not a task that can be left to political actors**, and can, in essence, **only be performed by the judiciary**. This, therefore, is an arena where courts have to be even more vigilant than usual, because what is at stake is the foundational legitimacy of **democracy** itself.

- In this context, the **recent conduct of Indian courts** reveals **an unfortunate gap between judicial rhetoric and actual enforcement**. First, the right to know: this much-vaunted principle, which has repeatedly been accorded pride of place by the Supreme Court, was flagrantly violated when the government introduced the **electoral bond scheme** early last year. **The electoral bond scheme allows limitless, secret donations to political parties, including (and especially) by corporations**. It strikes a dagger through the heart of the right to know, because it denies to voters the knowledge of who funds the people who ask for their vote. The electoral bonds scheme was challenged immediately after it came into force; the Supreme Court, however, held off on hearing the case until a few weeks ago, and then it postponed the case to after the elections, citing a paucity of time. In the meantime, significant sums of anonymous donations have come in through electoral bonds, and an overwhelming percentage of them have gone to the ruling party.
- Second, the secret ballot. During this election season, **Maneka Gandhi's threat to Muslim voters** to vote for her or else she would refuse to help them after she was elected, raised eyebrows across the country. However, as scholar Mukulika Banerjee had pointed out as early as 2017, and as journalist Ishita Trivedi demonstrated more recently, political parties are now able to determine voting outcomes at the level of individual booths. This destroys the very concept of the secret ballot, and makes threats like the ones Ms. Gandhi delivered extremely credible and capable of distorting the electoral process. However, when **in 2018 a case was filed before the Supreme Court asking for the use of totalizer machines in elections** — that would restore the secrecy of the ballot — the court dismissed it without even according it a hearing.

- **Voter complaints**
- Third, the freedom to vote itself. This election season has seen multiple complaints from voters who have found their names deleted from electoral rolls, without intimation or a chance to be heard. However, this is not new. The issue of voter deletions surfaced late last year, especially in the context of Assembly elections in Telangana, where the Election Commission of India (EC) itself admitted to the existence of the problem. It was alleged at the time — and has subsequently been established through detailed investigative reporting carried out by The **Huffington Post** — **that the EC was using an un-audited de-duplication software**, alongside (unauthorised) Aadhaar linking, to “cleanse” the electoral rolls, but the result, instead, was to **remove a very large number of genuine voters**. Accordingly, late last year, Srinivas Kodali, a **Hyderabad-based technologist, filed a case before the High Court, asking that the EC be required to reveal the source code of the algorithm it was using, and open it up for auditing**. Months have passed, the general election has come, but the High Court has failed to decide the petition.
- And lastly, public faith in the electoral process: in mid-March, Opposition parties filed a petition before the Supreme Court that would have settled, once and for all, any qualms about the use of electronic voting machines (EVMs). The request was to verify 50% of the EVMs using the voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) machines. The EC’s only objection to this was that it would increase the time of counting by six days. One would imagine that a six-day increasing of the counting period, in the context of a seven-phase month-and-a-half-long general election, is a ridiculously small price to pay for maintaining public faith in the electoral process. However, with three phases of the election having come and gone, the court is yet to even decide upon the petition.

- **Just words?**
- On multiple occasions, over the course of many years, the Supreme Court has waxed eloquent about the glories of Indian democracy, the importance of free and fair elections, and the supreme sanctity of the vote. And indeed, our democracy is a genuine achievement, worthy of pride. Democracy, however, does not sustain itself. The court's rhetoric has little purpose if, when it comes to the crunch, it evades deciding cases that call for it to descend from the commanding heights of eloquence, and into the weeds of actually enforcing the grand principles of democracy.
- **The voter's right to know, the secret ballot, and the freedom to vote itself — all these have been undermined to various degrees in the last few years**, throwing into serious doubt the freedom and fairness of elections. But on each occasion, when the courts have been called upon to address these problems, they have dodged and ducked the issues, instead of solving them.
- The rhetoric is beautiful, but without enforcement, the judiciary remains, in the words of Mathew Arnold, "an ineffectual angel beating in the void [its] luminous wings in vain."

The government's anti-corruption scorecard

The last five years have seen consistent attacks on anti-corruption laws and institutions



ANJALI BHARDWAJ & AMRITA JOHRI

The popular sentiment that helped the BJP in the 2014 general election was resentment against corruption in public life. The party's clarion call for a corruption-free India resonated with the electorate, who believed the BJP's prime ministerial candidate when he pledged, *"Na khaunga, na khane dunga"* (neither will I indulge in corruption, nor allow anyone else to indulge in it)".

Ironically, the last five years have seen consistent attacks on anti-corruption laws and institutions. Serious cases of big-ticket corruption have surfaced under the National Democratic Alliance regime, including banking frauds and the Rafale deal. At the same time, there is no evidence of any check on everyday corruption that impacts the delivery of services to people.

Blows to fighting graft

In 2015, the government proposed amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act. The amendment Bill, which was later approved by Parliament, narrows down the definition of corruption, increases the burden of proof necessary for punishing the corrupt, and makes things more arduous for whistle-blowers.

The most grievous blow is the strengthening of the shield available to officials accused of corruption. Investigating agencies have been barred from even initiating an inquiry or investigation into allegations of corruption without prior approval from the government. Effectively, this empowers political masters to decide whether they wish to allow a corruption inquiry against a government employee or not. The amendments have done away with the offence of abuse of position by a public servant, unless the element of bribery is established. This frustrates peoples' ability to fight corruption in cases which may not involve the payment of a bribe, as it may be done for other considerations like pleasing political masters for rewards. Also, cases involving gratification are often

GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCK PHOTO



impossible to trace as they may be deferred in the form of post-retirement benefits or paid through clandestine off-shore accounts.

Recent months have witnessed a brazen undermining of the autonomy of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). To insulate the organisation from government influence, the selection and transfer of the CBI Director is vested in a committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and the Chief Justice of India. However, the government, without consulting the selection committee, removed the erstwhile CBI Director Alok Verma and appointed an Interim Director, M. Nageswara Rao. Although the Supreme Court eventually struck down these decisions as being illegal, it was not before the credibility of the institution was seriously eroded.

The Lokpal law was enacted to set up an independent and empowered anti-corruption ombudsman, who would work without fear or favour to tackle cases of big-ticket corruption involving high-level government functionaries. The BJP government failed to take the necessary steps to appoint a Lokpal for nearly five years. To ensure the independence of the Lokpal, the law provides for a balanced selection committee, including the recognised Leader of the Opposition. After the 2014 general election, no one was recognised as the Leader of the Opposition. Instead of limiting itself to amending the Lokpal Act to substitute the recognised Leader of the Opposition with the

leader of the single largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha, the government introduced a 10-page amendment Bill which sought to fundamentally dilute the original law. The Bill was not enacted.

Three weeks prior to the 2019 general election, a selection committee without the Leader of the Opposition selected the chairperson and members of the Lokpal. The selection of the Lokpal by a committee having a preponderance of government representatives, and consequently an inherent bias towards candidates favoured by the ruling party, defeated the purpose of the law and undermined public trust in the institution even before it became functional.

The BJP government has failed to promulgate rules and operationalise the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014. Whistle-blowers, who speak truth to power by exposing corruption and wrongdoing, continue to be denied protection. Many Right to Information (RTI) users who have exposed corruption have been killed.

Everyday corruption

Corruption in India is not limited to collusive high-level scams. Petty corruption, which affects the delivery of basic services and rights to people, is rampant. This especially impacts the poor and marginalised, who are most dependent on public provisioning of rations, pensions, health and education. This form of corruption thrives primarily due to lack of effective mechanisms to hold officials accountable. A legislation to fix this problem was introduced in Parlia-

ment in the form of a Grievance Redress Bill in 2011. Unfortunately, it lapsed with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 2014 and needed to be reintroduced – a fact acknowledged by senior BJP leaders when they were in Opposition. Although one of the poll promises of the BJP was to ensure proper delivery of services to citizens, no attempts have been made by the government to reintroduce the Grievance Redress Bill, which would have empowered people to fight everyday corruption.

The RTI Act, one of the most effective tools to fight corruption and abuse of power, has been under consistent attack by the Modi government. Not a single commissioner was appointed to the Central Information Commission in the last five years without intervention by courts. In 2018, the government proposed regressive amendments to undermine the independence of information commissions. These were eventually abandoned due to public pressure.

The worst blow to the peoples' right to know came in the form of electoral bonds. There has been an urgent need to infuse greater transparency in political party funding. The electoral bond scheme, passed as a Money Bill in Parliament, prevents citizens from finding out who is funding political parties. In one stroke it has ensured that donations worth thousands of crores can be made anonymously. Not surprisingly, the largest benefactor of the electoral bonds scheme has been the ruling party. Citizens don't know who makes donations and whose interest, therefore, the party will serve.

Instead of putting in place a robust anti-corruption and grievance redress framework, draconian measures like demonetisation and mandatory use of Aadhaar have been pushed by the BJP government in the name of fighting corruption. These have done more harm than good. The BJP's lack of political will to take necessary steps to curb corruption has given credence to refrains like 'Chowkidar chor hai', as people witness allegations of graft flying thick and fast in a regime they voted to power to eradicate corruption.

Anjali Bhardwaj and Amrita Johri are transparency and anti-corruption activists associated with the National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information

- Corruption
- Autonomy of Institutions
- Anti corruption ombudsman
- Whistle blowers protection
- Delivery of services
- Electoral bonds

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Following are some **important features of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Bill, 2011**, passed by [Parliament](#).

- ** Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayukta at the level of the states.
- ** **Lokpal will consist of a chairperson and a maximum of eight members**, of which **50 per cent shall be judicial members**.
- ** **50 per cent of members of Lokpal shall be from SC/ST/OBCs, minorities and women.**
- ** The selection of chairperson and members of Lokpal shall be through a selection committee consisting of Prime Minister, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Chief Justice of India or a sitting Supreme Court judge nominated by CJI, eminent jurist to be nominated by the President of India on the basis of recommendations of the first four members of the selection committee.
- ** Prime Minister has been brought under the purview of the Lokpal.
- ** Lokpal's jurisdiction will cover all categories of public servants.
- ** All entities receiving donations from foreign source in the context of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) in excess of Rs 10 lakh per year are brought under the jurisdiction of Lokpal.
- ** Provides adequate protection for honest and upright public servants.
- ** Lokpal will have power of superintendence and direction over any investigation agency including CBI for cases referred to them by Lokpal.
- ** A high powered committee chaired by the Prime Minister will recommend selection of the Director, CBI.
- ** Directorate of Prosecution headed by a Director of Prosecution under the overall control of Director.
- ** The appointment of the Director of Prosecution, CBI on the recommendation of the Central Vigilance Commission.
- ** Transfer of officers of CBI investigating cases referred by Lokpal with the approval of Lokpal.
- ** The bill also incorporates provisions for attachment and confiscation of property acquired by corrupt means, even while prosecution is pending.
- ** The bill lays down clear time lines for preliminary enquiry and investigation and trial and towards this end, the bill provides for setting up of special courts.
- ** A mandate for setting up of the institution of Lokayukta through enactment of a law by the State Legislature within a period of 365 days from the date of commencement of the Act.

Cyclone Fani won't hit Tamil Nadu coast: meteorological department

'However, north Tamil Nadu might get moderate rainfall'

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

Cyclone Fani will not hit the Tamil Nadu coast, said officials of the Indian Meteorological Department on Sunday.

S. Balachandran, Deputy Director General of Meteorology of the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) said, "The cyclone will not make landfall in Tamil Nadu. We will not have any direct impact because of this. But we may get some moderate rainfall in northern parts of the State when it nears the coast of northern Tamil Nadu."

 **Chennai may get some mild showers for a day or two this week**

MET OFFICIALS

As far as Chennai is concerned, the residents may get minor respite from the heat as there could be some mild showers for a day or two this week, he said. The sky will remain partly cloudy.

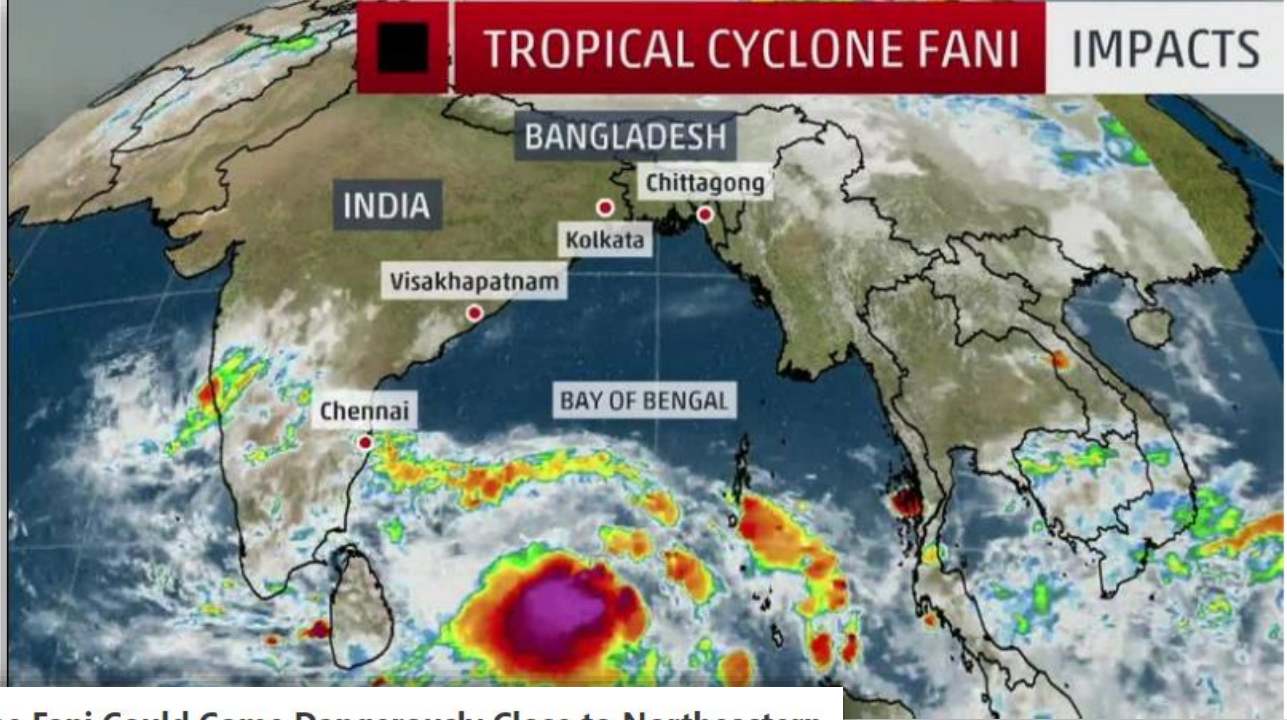
While the maximum will be around 36 degree Celsius, the minimum temperature is likely to be 28 degree Celsius. The storm now lies about 910 km off and it is likely to bring in only moderate rains to

some parts of northern Tamil Nadu.

The cyclone may get as close as 300 km off the Tamil Nadu coast on April 30 and after that, there may occur a change of direction too, officials said.

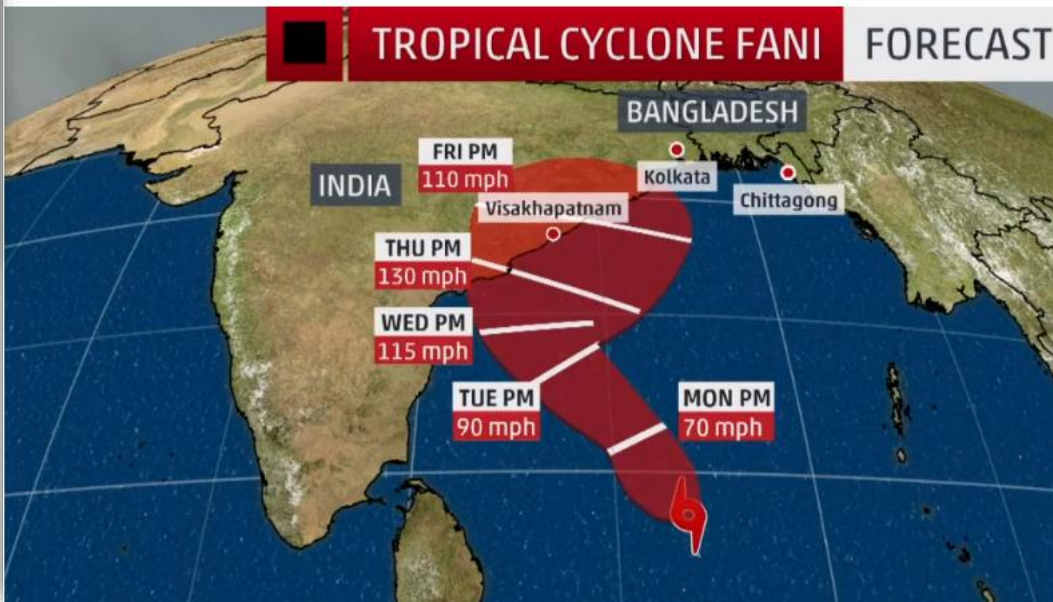
Cyclone Fani is likely to turn into a 'severe cyclonic storm'. This may develop into an 'extremely severe cyclone storm' on Wednesday.

Fishermen are advised not to venture into the sea from April 29 to May 1. Also, fishermen in deep sea have been asked to return at the earliest.



Tropical Cyclone Fani Could Come Dangerously Close to Northeastern India Later This Week

By Chris Dolce · 3 hours ago · weather.com



SC: filthy language not criminal intimidation

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Abusing a person with filthy language alone does not constitute the offence of criminal intimidation, the Supreme Court has held.

“The threat must be with intention to cause alarm to the complainant to cause that person to do or omit to do any work. Mere expression of any words without any intention to cause alarm would not be sufficient to bring in the application of this section,” a Bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and K.M. Joseph said in a judgment on April 26.

Justice Bhushan observed that the “intentional insult must be of such a degree that it should provoke a person to break the public peace or commit any other offence.”

“The mere allegation that the appellant came and



The court observed that mere allegation that the appellant abused the complainant can't be seen as criminal intimidation.

abused the complainant does not satisfy the ingredients [of criminal intimidation],” the court said.

The Bench was hearing an appeal filed by an insurance claim surveyor in Uttar Pradesh, who was accused of criminal intimidation and use of filthy language by a factory owner in Mathura district.



- **Section 503 in The Indian Penal Code**
- **503. Criminal intimidation.**—Whoever threatens another with any injury to his person, reputation or property, or to the person or reputation of any one in whom that person is interested, with intent to cause alarm to that person, or to cause that person to do any act which he is not legally bound to do, or to omit to do any act which that person is legally entitled to do, as the means of avoiding the execution of such threat, commits criminal intimidation.
Explanation.—A threat to injure the reputation of any deceased person in whom the person threatened is interested, is within this section. Illustration A, for the purpose of inducing B to desist from prosecuting a civil suit, threatens to burn B's house. A is guilty of criminal intimidation.

Srinagar-Leh NH open for traffic after 4 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ZOJILA

The 434-km strategic Srinagar-Leh National Highway, connecting the Kashmir Valley with the Ladakh region, was thrown open for traffic on Sunday after being closed for over four months due to heavy snowfall.

Lt. Gen. K. J. S. Dhillon, the General Officer Commanding of 15 Corps, along with other officials, reopened the highway at a ceremony at Zero-Point here.

The strategic road was closed for traffic in mid-December last year due to heavy accumulation of snow from Gagangir in Ganderbal district to Drass in Kargil district.

Zojila Pass, at 11,516 feet above sea level, connects the picturesque Kashmir Valley with the cold Indus valley desert through the 434-km long Srinagar-Leh road. Border Road Organisation was involved in the snow clearance operation.





Govt hikes customs duty on wheat to 40%

NEW DELHI

The government has hiked the customs duty on wheat to 40 % from 30% to "curb imports and protect the domestic industry". In May last year, the government had hiked the basic customs duty on wheat to 30% from 20%. PTI

New MBBS syllabus to roll out in August



'Massive exercise' under way 22 years after its first revision; practitioners concerned over lacunae

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

This August, undergraduate medical students across India will come into class to study a syllabus that has been revised after over two decades. Touted as a unique curriculum patented by the Medical Council of India (MCI), this "living document", which means that it is open to review and revision as required, is currently in its final lap of preparation before it is implemented.

Hectic preparation is on with the core group of 40,000 medical teachers – previously trained by the MCI – ensuring the "last group" training for teachers in individual colleges. "This is a massive exercise in itself," said an MCI official.

The group has been trained to teach the new components, including ethics, clinical exposure, inter-department co-ordination



Fresh treatment: The new curriculum by Medical Council of India is being billed as 'unique' ■ M.PERIASAMY

(teaching the same topic simultaneously), skill enhancement modules and a new foundation bridge course for graduates. "Teachers also have to be alert to the annual revision, which will include changing laws, new diseases, discoveries and updated research information," said Dr. Avinash N. Supe, member of the expert group of the MCI's academic cell.

But not all teachers are

happy with the updated syllabus, pointing to several critical omissions.

"The syllabus isn't wholesome and inclusive," said Dr. Satendra Singh, disability activist and medical doctor at the University College of Medical Sciences and Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital, Delhi.

"Disability competencies for health professionals are missing from the document.

The importance of empathetic non-verbal communication and unique medical problems associated with patients with disabilities has to be part of the new syllabus. Despite our submissions, after extensive consultation with stakeholders, we are taken aback by the fact there is no mention of it in actual document," he said.

'Outdated, dangerous'

Adds Dr. Zakirhusain Shaikh, Assistant Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Jamia Hamdard, Delhi: "Having an outdated medical curriculum is not just dangerous and life-threatening but also illegal when it doesn't conform to the legislation and judicial orders of the land." He added that the new syllabus was gender-sensitive.

Dr. Shaikh said that, re-

cently, the World Health Organization (WHO) changed the term Gender Identity Disorder (GID) to Gender Incongruence, and removed it from the list of mental disorders, but, "This hasn't been catered to in this new syllabus. Similarly, the American Psychiatric Association has also discarded GID and adopted Gender Dysphoria. Why then is the MCI still stuck with GID is baffling."

He added, "The entire document doesn't mention the word transgender even once, forget about including any other guidelines for transgender health. It still has in the curriculum, under the heading of 'sexual offences'. Transvestism is described as sexual perversion. All this when Section 377 regarding unnatural sexual offences and Section 497 regarding adultery have been termed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court."

Corridor linking India, Myanmar no longer under BRI framework

South Asia is now covered by three other major projects

ATUL ANEJA
BEIJING

India's decision to skip the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) may have led to the exclusion of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor from the list of projects covered by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) umbrella.

In an annex tagged with the Joint Communiqué of the Leaders' Roundtable of the BRF, which concluded in Beijing on Saturday, the Chinese Foreign Ministry website has not listed the BCIM as a project covered by the BRI – the giant connectivity initiative spearheaded by China to revive the ancient Silk Road across Eurasia and Africa.

Instead, South Asia is covered by three major undertakings – the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC); the Nepal-China Trans-Himalayan Multi-di-



Chinese President Xi Jinping. ■AP

mensional Connectivity Network, including Nepal-China cross-border railway; and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

India's non-participation

Citing "sovereignty" concerns, India, for the second time, did not participate in the BRF, as the CPEC passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

The 2,800-km BCIM corridor proposes to link Kunming in China's Yunnan pro-

vince with Kolkata, passing through nodes such as Mandalay in Myanmar and Dhaka in Bangladesh before heading to Kolkata.

Significantly, a report titled, "The Belt and Road Initiative Progress, Contributions and Prospects," released by the Leading Group for Promoting the Belt and Road Initiative on April 22, did list the BCIM as a BRI project. Last September, the BRI had got a high octane boost when Myanmar inked an agreement with China to establish the CMEC. The 1,700-km corridor provides China yet another node to access the Indian Ocean.

The CMEC will run from Yunnan Province of China to Mandalay in Central Myanmar. From there it will head towards Yangon, before terminating at the Kyaukpadaung Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in the Bay of Bengal.

Comfort food leads to more weight gain during stress: study

The brain produces a molecule which stimulates eating

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Indulging in high-calorie 'comfort' foods when you are stressed can lead to more weight gain than usual, scientists say.

Researchers from the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Australia discovered a molecular pathway in the brain, controlled by insulin, which drives the additional weight gain.

Using an animal model, the team showed that a high-calorie diet when combined with stress resulted in more weight gain than the same diet caused in a stress-free environment.

"This study indicates that we have to be much more conscious about what we're eating when we're stressed," said Herbert Herzog, who led the study.

To understand what controls this 'stress eating', the team investigated different areas of the brain in mice. While food intake is mainly controlled by a part of the brain called the hypothalamus, another part of the brain – the amygdala – processes emotional responses, including anxiety.

"Our study showed that when stressed over an ex-



tended period and high calorie food was available, mice became obese more quickly than those that consumed the same high fat food in a stress-free environment," said Kenny Chi Kin Ip, lead author of the study published in the journal *Cell Metabolism*.

At the centre of this weight gain, the scientists discovered, was a molecule called NPY, which the brain produces naturally in response to stress to stimulate eating in humans as well as mice. "We discovered that when we switched off the production of NPY in the amygdala weight gain was reduced. Without NPY, the weight gain on a high-fat diet with stress was the same as weight gain in the stress-free environment," said Mr. Ip. "This shows a clear link between stress, obesity and NPY," he said.

To understand what

might control the NPY boost under stress, the scientists analysed the nerve cells that produced NPY in the amygdala and found they had receptors, or 'docking stations', for insulin – one of the hormones which control our food intake.

Under normal conditions, the body produces insulin just after a meal, which helps cells absorb glucose from the blood and sends a 'stop eating' signal to the hypothalamus feeding centre of the brain. The scientists discovered that chronic stress alone raised the blood insulin levels only slightly, but in combination with a high-calorie diet, the insulin levels were 10 times higher than mice that were stress-free and received a normal diet.

The study showed that these prolonged, high levels of insulin in the amygdala caused the nerve cells to become desensitised to insulin, which stopped them from detecting insulin altogether. In turn, these desensitised nerve cells boosted their NPY levels, which both promoted eating and reduced the bodies' normal response to burn energy through heat.

Social media fraud rose 43% in 2018: report

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
SAN FRANCISCO

In a sign that platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp are emerging as new public square for criminal deception, a study has found that social media fraud increased 43% in 2018.

The results suggest that cybercriminals are increasingly relying on Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and other legitimate social media and messaging platforms to communicate with each other and sell stolen identities, credit card numbers and other ill-gotten gains.

Given the ease of use, absence of fees and other benefits of these platforms, continuation of this trend in 2019 should come as no surprise, said the whitepaper 'Current State of Cybercrime – 2019', released by RSA Security.

According to the researchers, fraud in the mobile channel has grown significantly over the past several years, with 70% of artifice originating in the mobile channel in 2018. In particular, fraud from mobile apps increased 680% between 2015 and 2018, said the study, adding that the use of rogue mobile applications to defraud consumers was on the rise.

Why Christina Koch will stay on the ISS for 11 months

NASA wants to study the effects of spaceflight on a woman

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
WASHINGTON

Astronaut Christina Koch will set a record for the longest single spaceflight by a woman when she completes her 11-month-long mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS) in February 2020. Her long stay on the ISS has to do with NASA's preparation of human missions to the moon and Mars.

Ms. Koch's mission will provide researchers the opportunity to observe effects of long-duration spaceflight on a woman, NASA said. Her planned mission duration will be just shy of the longest single spaceflight by a NASA astronaut – 340 days set by former astronaut Scott Kelly during his one-year mission in 2015-16.

Lack of data

The mission became necessary as the majority of data available is on male astronauts. But male and female bodies respond differently, and health conditions occur at different rates in male and female populations.

With this mission, re-



Christina Koch

searchers hope to better understand astronaut adaptability over long periods of space exposure and better support the development of effective countermeasures to maintain crew health.

NASA last month accepted a challenge from the Donald Trump administration to return humans to the moon by 2024, four years ahead of the U.S. space agency's earlier set target.

"This time, when we go to the moon, we will stay. And then we will use what we learn on the moon to take the next giant leap— sending astronauts to Mars," NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine had said then.

Ms. Koch's stay on the

space station will eclipse the previous mark set by Peggy Whitson of 288 days on Expeditions 50 through 52 in 2016-17, NASA said.

Ms. Koch arrived on board the space station on March 14, beginning scientific research activities as part of the Expedition 59 crew. "It's an honour to follow in Peggy's footsteps," Ms. Koch was quoted as saying by NASA.

Meanwhile, NASA's Human Research Programme continues to lay the groundwork for future one-year missions on the space station and has selected 25 proposals to investigate biological, physiological, and behavioural adaptations to spaceflight. With information gained from the selected studies during future missions, NASA said it aims to address five hazards of human space travel – space radiation, isolation and confinement, distance from Earth, gravity fields (or lack thereof), and hostile/closed environments that pose great risks to the human mind and body in space.

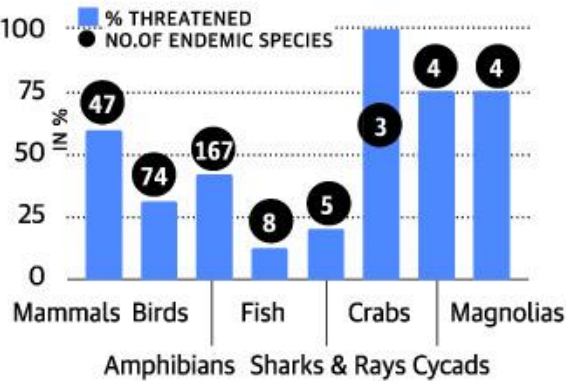
Biodiversity in the red?

Of all the recorded species worldwide, India accounts for 7-8% (45,000 plant and 91,000 animal species). However, several species are being threatened due to factors such as habitat loss, climate change and overexploitation of resources.
By **Varun B. Krishnan**



Threatened in India

There are over 310 species of plants and animals endemic to India. About 41% of these species are now threatened



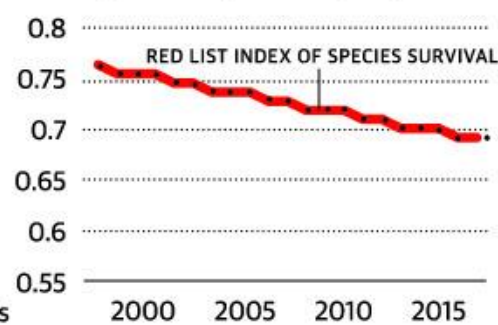
More species discovered

Though more species are being threatened, new species are also being recorded. For instance, several new frog species have been discovered in India over the years

EX - Extinct, **CR** - Critically Endangered, **EN** - Endangered, **VU** - Vulnerable, **NT** - Near Threatened, **LR/CD** - Lower Risk/Conservation Dependent, **DD** - Data Deficient, **LC** - Least Concern

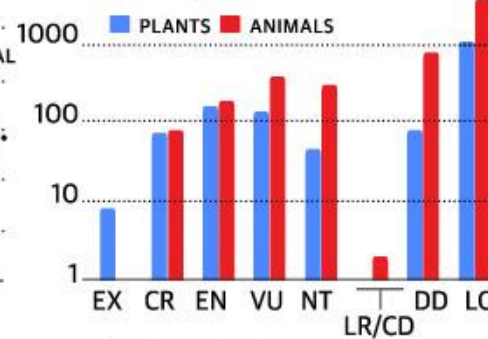
Declining species survival

India's Red List Index of species survival* shows a downward trend, indicating a declining survival probability of species



Threat looms large

Eight plant species are now extinct in India. There are over 150 critically endangered plants and animals



*Index has values from 0 (all species are classified as extinct or possibly extinct) to 1 (all species are classified as least threatened)

Snow Leopard (VU)

Jeypore Ground Gecko (CE)

Indian vulture (CE)

Asian Elephant (EN)

Great Indian Bustard (CE)

Source: International Union for Conservation of Nature

MCQ 1

1. PPF can be opened by govt employees only
2. Current interest rate is fixed at 8 %

Choose correct

- (A) Only 1
- (B) Only 2
- (C) Both
- (D) None

MCQ 2

1. Gagandeep Kang becomes first Indian woman scientist to be awarded Fellowship of the Royal Society (FRS), United Kingdom.
2. She was associated with RotaVac, a vaccine for HIV

Choose correct

- (A) Only 1
- (B) Only 2
- (C) Both
- (D) None

MCQ 3

About arjuna awards, choose correct.

1. It is bestowed upon sportsperson for consistently outstanding performance for four year.
2. Highest award for sports in India
3. It is conferred by Ministry of home affairs

- (A) 1 & 2
(B) 2 only
(C) 1 only
(D) All

MCQ 4

1. India finished Asian Wrestling Championships tournament held in Xian, China with a total of 16 medals.
2. Unfortunately, India couldn't win even a single gold medal

Choose correct

- (A) Only 1
- (B) Only 2
- (C) Both
- (D) None

MCQ 5

1. Safe city Project is implemented by Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoW&CD).
2. It was launched in all cities of india
3. It's a central sector scheme

Choose correct

- (A) Only 1
- (B) Only 2 & 3
- (C) All
- (D) None

MCQ 6

Country not opening into black sea

- A. Bulgaria
- B. Georgia
- C. Moldova
- D. Romania

Q

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